

Cope's Bridge (Brandywine Bridge)
Over Brandywine Creek, State Route
162 (Strasburg Road)
Copesville (East Bradford Township)
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-206

HABS
PA
15-COPES
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. PA-206

COPE'S BRIDGE (Brandywine Bridge)

Location: Over Brandywine Creek, State Route 162 (Strasburg Road), Copesville (East Bradford Township), Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Commissioners, Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Brief Statement of Significance: Fine example of an early stone arched bridge still in excellent condition. It is a popular subject for paintings and photographs.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Commissioners, Chester County, Pennsylvania.
2. Date of erection: Built 1805-08. There is an 1807 date stone built into the south side of the north wall of the bridge. The original 1805 bridge date stone was built into the gable end of Anthony Taylor's house on Strasburg Road in East Bradford Township in 1836. Taylor was a mason and worked on the bridge.
3. Architect, builder, suppliers: John Lewis was the engineer; Thomas Taylor and Samuel Townsend were the superintendents; Frederick Syfret was the stone cutter for the date stone.
4. Original plans, construction: None known.
5. Alterations and additions: Minor repairs for maintenance purposes.
6. Important old views and references:

Views: Many paintings and photographs can be found in the area.

References: Bridge records in county engineer's office, Court-house, West Chester, Pennsylvania and clippings and files in the Chester County Historical Society on Cope's Bridge over Brandywine Creek.

B. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None Known.

C. Supplemental Material:

1. Original Bridge Papers Vol. 1 no. 124

Proceedings Respecting a Bridge in the Township of East Bradford on the Waters of Brandywine Creek At or near where the new State Road crosses said Creek. Confirmed 1804 Recorded Docket 4, p.21

To the respectful Judges of the Court of General Quarter Session to be held at West Chester for the County of Chester February Term 1804.

The Petition of the Subscribers Inhabitants of the County aforesaid
Respectfully Sheweth

That the Wooden Bridge over the East Branch of Brandywine Creek on the new State road in East Bradford Township is going fast to decay and will soon be dangerous for heavy loaded waggons to pass over, that said Bridge was first erected in the year 1789 and about six years ago had all the upper works made new and now the whole is again nearly gone to decay, or at least so much so, that it is generally Judged it must the Ensuing Summer be newly built, and at various times temporary repairs have been made and every few years there must be additional expense to keep it in repair.

Your petitioners therefore conceived it will be vastly more advantageous to the County and travellers to have a permanent Stone Arched Bridge erected on a well established foundation and well built of good materials which may last a long time and want little or no repairs, the Stone in the present Bridge are on the spot and great quantities of good Stone within a few rods that are offered gratis to the public to Supply what may be wanting.

The great increase of Traveling on the New State road aforesaid will always warrant the necessity of such a Bridge on so leading a road and over so great a Stream and when once erected permantly will never cost the County anything of consequence hereafter and the wooden Bridge has been almost a continual expense every few years.

Your petitioners therefore hope the Court will appoint a Jury to view the same and see whether it is most advantageous to remove the decay wooden Bridge and to erect a permanent Stone Arched Bridge in its stead

Which favor shall be gratefully remembered

(84 signatures)

2. THE CHESTER & DELAWARE FEDERALIST
West Chester, Pennsylvania.
Wednesday, 12th July, 1809.

An account of monies paid for expense incurred by Chester county, in building a bridge across Brandywine creek, near Joseph Buffington's tilt-mill.

BRIDGE	DR.	
	Dolls	Cts.
To cash paid,		
Engineers,	259	00
Stonecutters,	3012	77
Laborers,	8461	68
Sundries, store ac. &c.	554	26
Pumpmaker and carpenters' bills,	1040	97
For stone and hauling,	2233	77
Superintendence,	652	20
For stone delivered by the perch,	1076	37
Fillingin, removing rock, &c.,	407	79
Masons' bills,	3748	65
Timber, as per sawyers' bills,	1653	2
Smiths' bills, pumping, &c.,	2175	25
Sundries for lime and hauling,	1550	25
Painter's bill,	85	5
	26911	3

CONTRA		CR.	
		Dls.	Cts.
By Cash on sales of lumber, &c.,		223	24
Do. Do.		90	49
By balance, being the amount of expence incurred in building said bridge, exclusive of commissioners' pay for attending on the same,		26597	30
		26911	3

July 5.--4t

3. Extracts from "The Stone Which the Builders Refused" by Francis D. Brinton. Original manuscript in The Chester County Historical Society, 225 North High St. West Chester, Penna.

This research was begun because Mr. and Mrs. Walter Cornogg of East Bradford Township called our attention to an old stone built into the west gable end of their house,---inscribed thus,--

BRANDYWINE BRIDGE BUILT BY THE COUNTY OF CHESTER. COMMISSIONERS, JOHN RAMSEY, THOMAS TAYLOR JAMES LOCKHART Supt. SAMUEL TOWNSEND. ANNO DO 1805 A.T. 1836

(SIZE about 3 feet wide 2 feet high)

And built into the south wall of the Cornogg house is a stone

A.T.

1727

1836 (Size about 1 foot wide 18 inches high)

The first mention of a good bridge at that point (Strassburg Road, over Brandywine Creek, in East Bradford township) was one built by Richard Arnitt in 1789, for the County. It was 86 ft. long by 11 ft. wide and called "Brandywine Bridge." His account book showing time and labor on this, is now at Chester County Historical Society and mentions an old small bridge there previously.

In the year 1804 a long petition was presented to Court stating that the wooden bridge over the east branch of Brandywine in East Bradford was fast going to decay and would soon be dangerous, etc., and asked that a permanent stone bridge be erected there. This petition was approved by the Court, Grand Jury and County Commissioners and from then on during the next 5 years the minutes and accounts kept by County Commissioners are filled with references to the new "Brandywine Bridge" on the "State Road" near "Buffington's Tilt Hammer." (now Copetown)

It seems to have been built by various masons, carpenters, stone cutters, laborers, etc. under the direction of one of the County Commissioners, Thomas Taylor of Westtown was Superintendent until May 1806, when he resigned and Samuel Townsend was appointed to continue the work. This Samuel Townsend lived at Pughtown and was father of David Townsend and grandfather of Honorable William Townsend.

The bridge appears to have been completed the fall of 1808 and in July 1809 a complete account of the cost \$26,911 was published in the newspapers. There were hundreds of orders drawn to pay the bills and they are most interesting reading, but we were looking for data on a date stone.

So we find an order August 4, 1807 to pay Frederick Syfret, stone cutter, for date stone, B. Bridge \$6.23 and again Oct. 3, 1808-Frederick Syfret, for a date stone B. Bridge \$8175. Why 2 date stones? Now look at the older stone and note that it has the date 1805 and the names of 3 commissioners and the superintendent on it. This was correct for that year, but by 1808 when the bridge was completed, these 3 commissioners had been succeeded by John G. Farke in 1805, Joshua Gibbons 1806, David Denny 1807, Jesse Good 1808, etc. a new one for each year. So, it looks as though the first stone was discarded and the second date stone of 1807 with no names thereon was placed in the north wall, facing the road "where he who rides may read."...

(Concerning the Cornogg House, Strassburg Road, East Bradford township, having the 1805 Bridge date stone built in gable)

The Sharpless Genealogy shows he (Anthony Taylor) was a son of Titus Taylor of Westtown, one of 11 children, born 1781, married 1804, Edith Sharpless, born 1785, a daughter of John Sharpless. He was by trade a mason, and we find in a Diary kept by Benjamin Hunt that "A.T. moved to Joseph Buffington's house 3-11-1805." This was just across from the new Brandywine Bridge where masons would be much needed so it seems reasonable that he would procure work there. Also his uncle, Thomas Taylor of Westtown Township, a County Commissioner, was also Superintendent of erection of this bridge.

One of his descendants writes "Grandfather Anthony Taylor built this bridge at Cope's Mill". A search thru the orders making payments for work done on the bridge does not reveal any made directly to Anthony, but to various boss masons working there. This was probably because he was a young man of 24 and worked under others who paid wages weekly.

The Tax Records of Chester County show that Anthony Taylor was first assessed for 1803 in Westtown Twp. as a Freeman (unmarried) and mason by trade 1804 " " " " " "

1805 in East Bradford Twp. as an Inmate (married)
1806 & 1807 not found

In 1808-09-10, he was back in Westtown Twp. on a farm of 80 acres belonging to his father. 1811 to 1819 he was farming in Goshen Twp. on 158 acres belonging to his father-in-law, John Sharpless. 1820 to 1830 in Tredyffrin Twp. on 235 acres belonging to same and in 1831 in Birmingham on a 150 acre farm.

He evidently prospered because he could then purchase this fine farm of 221 acres which was assessed in 1832 @ \$34-- , plus a house @\$280, barn \$250, outbuilding \$60.

His first wife Edith (Sharpless) died 1823, leaving 3 children and he married 2nd, Lydia Richards, who died 3/11/1832 leaving two more children. This would certainly be a great loss and care to him so we find that again on 11/10/1836 he married a widow, Amy (Chamberlain) Callahan, born 1787, died 1872.

Note here that the year 1836 was also when he rebuilt the house and his assessment for 1838 was 205 acres at \$9888, buildings \$1100, showing some increase in value...

A careful examination of the present stone house and the two date stones with the added year 1836 on each, seems to indicate that Anthony had torn down all the original brick house except the small kitchen and being a mason had erected an entirely new structure of stone, much larger and more of the style of the period, except that the fire place in the present dining room, is much larger than usual for that time.

We must now surmise that in as much as Anthony Taylor had worked on Brandywine Bridge at least the first year and knowing the date stone of 1805 was dis-

carded he had enough sentimental interest in it to bring it to his new home, and build it into the gable end of his house, adding his initials and the date 1836 to both stones. The eastern additions seems to have been built some years later.

This is the story as records show of the old house and farm. Incomplete as they are all records of the distant past but we can read into it much of human interest of those days and people. A great deal of credit for the foregoing is due to the unusually complete records in our County Court House, and to the files and indexes, and historical and genealogical material at the Chester County Historical Society.

Prepared by Bart Anderson - September 17, 1963
Curator, Chester County Historical Society

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The bridge is constructed of random rubble with stone foundations. Its length is made up of three arches, the center span being the widest. The arches are formed by cut voussoirs and are separated by buttresses. The bridge is oriented from east to west.